2072

Not in T.P.L.
Not in Wetters

PETRA,

A Poem, read at the Convocation of Trinity College, Toronto, on the 18th December, 1862; to which was awarded the Prize for English Verse, presented by the Archdeacon of York.

"Oh! death in life, the days that are no more!"

The wave of life bore high its crested top;
Then sank, and fell into a lower deep,
And passed away, and left an azure calm.
The winds of Heaven raised the sands of Time,
And formed a monument, a mighty Fame,
A glorious city, strongest of the earth;
And then these blasts rushed on, and hurled it down,
And 'neath the sands of Time it lay concealed.
Before the weary feet of Israel
Trod the hot sands that bound their promised rest,
Petra was seated, rock-throned as a queen.
And now when Israel's sole can find no rest,
Petra rock-buried is no more a queen,
Is but a name, a shadow of the past
Left by God's light upon the mountain side.
Power sought a home, and hovered o'er her vale,
And built an eyry on the hanging cliff
Commerce brought sea-worn, and brown-dusted men
Over the billows of cerulean depths,
And o'er the waveless seas of Araby,
To wreathe a golden crown for Petra's brow,
And pour their jewels at her sandalled feet.
The busy sounds of hardy labour rose,
When rose the song of early-singing bird;
And when blue night put forth her dewy lamps
The voice of tuneful mirth was heard around.
Art came and smiled on Toil; and Beauty grew
Amid their homes, unnoticed; as a child
That plays unheeded in the house he glads.
Here, first, welled forth the crystal stream that bathes
In glowing power the reason of the world,
And understanding gleamed within their eyes.
Pomp had its throne, proud pageants swelled their hearts,
And victory clothed with fame their mighty Kings.
The proudest blossom on the bush of Time,
A full-blown rose, it bloomed in crimson pride,
And centred on itself the praise of men,
And scorned the root and sap which gave it being.
And where is now that rose? Scentless and dead,
It's withered leaves lie scattered on the ground;
For God hath spoken, and the proud are low.
Blank ruin calls to the past, and solitude
Wakens a death-like echo. The sad air
Breathes but of death. The heavy, storm-born cloud
Of wrath has hung low in the burdened sky;
As hangs the wreath of gloom above the burnt,
And blackened ground where once a city stood.
The sculptured homes of living and of dead,
Reft of their tenants by the hand of Time!
A lifeless statute of the life that was,
Blacked with the dust and cobwebs of decay!
An empty nest that once was sweet with song!
The homes where love let in the summer sun;
The homes which hate made dark with winter's gloom;
The cot where bright-eyed hunger was at home;
The gold-built castle where her kings were fed;
The hallowed temple where her gods were praised:
All—are the homes of dragons and of beasts,
And shrieking owls, and ravens gloomy-plumed.
Silent the voice of power that scorned the world;
Silent the eager shouts of those who came
With treasures of that world, far-gathered from
The dusky East, the golden grained glebes
Of sunny Egypt, and the farther west:
Silent the toilful sounds of horny hands,
The manifold rich sounds of cheerful work;
Silent the songs of those who plucked the grapes
Purpling the ripened vineyard, and of those
Who trod the wine-press, with light purpled feet;
Silent are they who quaffed the goblet's stream,
While harpist singer sang his olden lay,
And every eye was like a well of mirth;
Silent the temple and the priests' proud chants;
And silent King, and all who swelled the pomp
Of Golden glory, and were loud with pride.

The Eternal Voice that speaks in history spake:—
"When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make,
"Thee desolate." And Petra knows 'twas God.